

HOME SUPPLEMENT

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## The Representative Woman's Point of View

**MARIE TEMPEST** holds forth on the superstitions of Stage Folk.

**UNLIKE** most actresses, she puts no faith whatever in signs and omens.

**YET**—she would not be happy if she were to break a looking-glass on the day of the first performance.

**"SUPERSTITIOUS? Bah!"** exclaimed Miss Marie Tempest, the comedienne, who is again in America after an absence of fifteen years.

She was perched in a characteristic attitude on the edge of a chair in her apartment. Delicate and dainty, with a piquant face and quick, restless movements, Miss Tempest seems the embodiment of motion, and gives the impression that to keep still for long at a time would be the most difficult thing in the world for her.

Miss Tempest was dressed in a long, trailing gown of brown velvet, with a small brown velvet hat setting off her wavy red-brown hair. This hair, with her finely molded figure, her sparkling blue eyes and delicate complexion, make up a Dresden-China picture of loveliness that gives Miss Tempest the unusual distinction of being an actress whose beauty bears close inspection and who is as attractive off the stage as on.

### Few Actresses Are Free From the Superstition About Umbrellas

"Yes, I know that the people of the stage are proverbially superstitious," remarked the comedienne in a staccato voice, as individual as the rest of her personality, "but I'm not—not a bit! So I must be the exception that proves the rule, eh?"

"There are so many superstitions. Heavens! If one were to worry over them, where would one be? Take that one about the open umbrella or parasol, for instance. Most actors think it fatal to walk under an open one on the stage. But it doesn't bother me. In my play I have a red parasol which I think rather fetching, and I hold it directly over my head. It may be defying the fates, but it doesn't seem to have affected the fortunes of 'Kitty' so far." The comedienne smiled complacently.

"But women often carry parasols on the stage," interjected her visitor.

Miss Tempest gave a laughing nod of assent. "Yes, but did you ever notice how? Nonchalantly twirling behind their backs. That's the way they get around it. Watch them. I doubt if you ever saw one raise her parasol over her head. Now, did you?"

The visitor could not recollect that she had.

### The Closing Lines of a Play Are Never Spoken at Rehearsals

"Tricks of the trade," laughed Miss Tempest. "There is more than one way to kill a cat, you know, and the superstitious have a hundred ways."

"Just about the same superstitions obtain on the English stage as here, I should imagine," she continued, "for, after all, people are much alike the world over. Actors do not like when rehearsing a new piece to speak the last words of the play. It is thought to be bad luck. Whoever has the last line omits it until the opening night. Neither do they wish their associates in a play to wish them good luck, or to be solicitous as to whether or not they are in good form. Opera singers are particularly superstitious on this point. They regard as a bird of ill omen any person who ventures to inquire, on the day of a performance, if they are in good voice. When the question is put they never by any chance reply, but ignore it, shivering inwardly. Amusing, isn't it?" There was a merry twinkle in Miss Tempest's eyes.

### Why Is It Lucky to Put the Left Foot Forward?

"Then there is a tradition that it is good luck to come on the stage with a certain foot always first. Your popular Miss Maudie Adams, I hear, invariably makes her entrance with the left foot forward; and others of the profession have the same trick. Left or right foot—it doesn't matter which, so long as it is always one and not the other."

"Do I? Not much!" She emphatically tapped a little French-shod foot on the floor. "I don't believe in it. If I did, my life would be so miserable trying



**SOME** players object to being wished good luck.

**MAUDE ADAMS** always is careful to enter the stage left foot forward.

**HOW** to offset the effect of bad omens, American and English stage superstitions are much alike.

to remember which foot I must put on the stage first that I'd probably end by jumping on with both feet together, and that would not be exactly a graceful entrance. Now, would it?" appealing, with a rising English inflection in her voice.

### It's Bad Luck to Whistle if You're a Thespian

"You've heard, I suppose, that it is considered bad luck for actors to whistle in their dressing rooms. The legend is that if they do, the person outside nearest the door gets discharged. Now, what would I do if I believed that? I whistle all the time!" She puckered up her mouth expressively, her eyes dancing.

"And you don't lose your associates in consequence?"

"Never. Whistling is just as natural to me as breathing. I couldn't stop even if I wanted to, which I don't."

One of the most curious of the theatrical superstitions is the belief that it invariably brings good luck to touch the hunch on the back of a deformed person. Actors, in passing a hunchback on the street or in any other place, will manage to touch surreptitiously the hunch; and many an actor goes out of his way on the day of a first performance to come in contact with a person having this deformity, in order to insure success to himself in the new part.

Asked about this superstition, Miss Tempest said she was no more affected by it than by others, and then, woman-like, she made a confession.

### Even Those Most Free From Superstition Fear Broken Mirrors

"There is just one thing in that line that I feel strongly about. I shouldn't want to break a looking-glass, or have one break where I was, on the day of a first performance. That's inconsistent, isn't it? But it's the truth. It never has happened to me, but I am sure it would give me the fidgets if it did. And I hate peacock feathers. I never allow them in sight. But that is because I think they are hideous, and not because I am superstitious about them."

The advent of Miss Tempest's husband, Mr. Cosmo Gordon Lennox, the playwright, a typical blond, broad-shouldered Britisher, gave the talk another turn.

"It is a most astonishing place, your country," Mr. Lennox remarked, by way of greeting. "It has the most stimulating atmosphere I ever encountered. It's my first visit to the States, you know, and my expectations have been surpassed."

"Yes," broke in Miss Tempest. "I told my husband he could form no idea—in spite of my enthusiasm—of what America really was until he got here. I have always said it was the greatest country in the world to work in, and now he agrees with me perfectly."

"I do, indeed," assented Mr. Lennox. "Why, one couldn't help working in the States. Everyone is doing it, and doing it so well that one is instantly inspired to do one's best. It's no end exhilarating!" The Britisher squared his shoulders suggestively.

### An Appreciative Word for Theatre Audiences This Side the Water

"And you're all so keen about the theatre," remarked Miss Tempest, "and so responsive. Everybody—all classes—seem bent on getting all the fun out of life possible. In their love of pleasure and desire to be amused, Americans are growing more and more like the French. A thing that strikes us from the stage is the response here of the galleries, particularly the upper one, where it is supposed that a less intelligent class sits. Our fun seems to be as keenly appreciated and enjoyed there as in the stalls. We feel it constantly. It is delightful, and a novel experience to my husband, who has been accustomed to the stolidity of similar parts of the house in English theatres. How do I account for it? I don't. I just enjoy it."

A characteristic reply, for the buoyant comedienne evidently prefers to revel in her pleasures rather than to analyze them.

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